

# Black River Local School District

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## Senate Finance Committee House Bill 96 May 29, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill (HB) 96, the biennial budget.

Black River serves 885 students and the district spans 114 square miles. During the summer of 2024, Black River was one of the first school districts in the state to participate in the Ohio Department of Education's Summer Food Service Program with a vended non-congregate program. To qualify for this program, at least one of your buildings must have a minimum of 50% free and reduced percentage rate and your students must be in a rural area. The district worked with a vendor to provide meals that were delivered by UPS to the students' homes. By the end of the summer, we were providing 2 meals a day to 300 students. Over the course of the summer, we served 33,380 meals to our students.

My district is also on the Guarantee. In fact, since the inception of the Fair School Funding Plan, my district has been on the Guarantee. This means that Black River has been funded at basically the same dollar amount for the past 5 years.

***I am here today to ask on behalf of my students and my taxpayers to request that the Senate continues the phase-in of the formula with updated base cost inputs.***

As a Guarantee district, my district knows we will not be getting increases in state aid, but we also knew we would not be seeing our state aid decreased. Over the past 4 years, as the cost of everything from utilities to healthcare has increased, the percentage of our state funding as a percentage of our entire budget has decreased. I know there are many districts in the state that have large cash-flow balances. We are not one of those districts. The increases in local tax dollars have been helping the district combat the rising costs of everything else. Last fiscal year, state funding accounted for 48% of our general fund. This fiscal year, the percentage of state funding of our general fund will be 46%. If next year's state budget does not have a working formula with updated inputs, then that percentage will continue to decrease for my district which provided meals to a third of its student population over the summer. **Simply put, my district is increasing more dependent on local tax dollars.**

House Bill 96 also has a provision that affects districts who have a cash balance of more than 30% of their expenses. This would be done through the budget commission. My district spans 3 counties. Black River is governed by the Medina County budget commission. Only 38% of the voters in my district live in Medina County. Therefore 62% of my voters are not able to vote for the people elected to be on that commission, a commission that will have the authority to overrule the decisions of the Black River Board of Education, who are elected by all my voters.

***This is not only bad policy, but it is unamerican.***

Chair Cirino and members of the committee, thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.